



Child Welfare

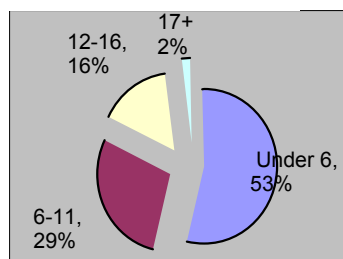
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Purpose

Child welfare services are directed at three outcomes – safety for children at risk, permanency, and child and family well-being.

Who

Age of Abuse, Neglect Victims



The DHS provides services for children who have been or are at-risk of being abused or neglected, and for children determined to be a child in need of assistance (CINA). Over half of child abuse victims are under the age of six, and three-fourths of all abuse is “denial of critical care,” better known as neglect. The greatest risk factors are parental substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence.

What

The department:

- Assesses reports of child abuse to determine if the child is safe and whether abuse has occurred. During FY2008, DHS completed 22,180 child abuse assessments. In FY08, as in most years, a little more than a third of assessments were founded for abuse.
- Provides services to maintain safety at home for children who have been abused. If safety at home is not possible, the department arranges temporary out-of-home placement, first seeking relatives to help. Other options include family foster care, group care, shelter care, and supervised apartment living.
- Provides permanency services, including family reunification, adoption and guardianship.
- Assists foster care youth aged 16 to 18 to prepare for adulthood, and provides extensive support for aged-out youth who have jobs or are in school.
- Works with communities to prevent child abuse and develop community partnerships for child protection.

How are We Doing?

In SFY 2005, the department launched a redesigned child welfare system and used it to successfully complete a demanding federal program improvement plan. Iowa is improving on most major federal child welfare indicators, especially a reduction in repeat maltreatment (now below 7 percent, compared to the 6 percent federal benchmark) and a reduction in foster care re-entry (now less than 15 percent). Highlights of the redesign include:

- Creation of centralized intake of abuse complaints and standardized risk assessments, helping to prevent regional variations.
- Free and voluntary help for low-risk families (the “Community Care” program).
- Expanded use of family team meetings to engage families.
- Sharply expanded percent of children and their families who receive at least monthly visits from DHS caseworkers.
- Strategies to reduce disproportional representation of children and families of color.
- Regular and public reporting of Iowa’s performance compared to federal benchmarks. <https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/digitaldashboard/>
- Results-based child welfare service contracts that provide more flexible individualized services for children and families, and which provide incentives for results.
- Permanency for older youth. The DHS provides guardianship subsidies for youth for whom neither family reunification nor adoption are viable, and it has a rapidly expanding Preparation for Adult Living program for aged-out foster youth.